

"In the language of the Jibaros the energetic and vehement character of these Indians is manifest, and many sounds are consequently pronounced more sharply and emphatically than in European languages. Besides this, we have to remember that the Jibaros do not express their thoughts and feelings merely by words but also by mimicry and all sorts of gestures, by movements of the arms, the feet, the head, indeed by their whole body, on certain occasions also by means of their arms, the lance and the shield. As I have stated above, it makes a peculiar, almost awe-inspiring impression to see two Jivaro Indians engaged in a ceremonial conversation. We have to take these accessory means of expression into account if we want to form an adequate idea of the language of these savages."

"The remainder of the night our men slept in this same section of the house and during most of the following day they retained their places along the wall of the Jivaría in comparative quiet. At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, or 24 hours after our arrival, Caneros pulled his seat in front of Ambusha and began a vigorous ceremonial conversation, very loud, and delivered in a sort of syncopated rhythm, beating time with his feet and gesturing with his arms, while Ambusha replied in similar vein, each of them punctuating the talk with ejaculations of 'Casa', 'Casa', (So that's it!), 'Ho', 'Ha', (Good! Fine!), 'Tsa', 'Tsa', 'Tsa', (No, no, no!), 'Tcah', 'Tcah', (I don't know). The substance of the conversation concerned the events that had happened on the trip and other events of interest that had taken place since the speakers had last met.

After about half an hour Caneros moved his seat in front of Utita and went through the same performance, then with Tuki, and finally with Tsamagashi. Meanwhile, the remainder of the men sat quietly by the walls, apparently indifferent to what was being said. During [98] these curious conversations, the fist is closed lightly and the palm of the hand turned toward the face. While talking, the knuckles are placed against the mouth. As they talk they spit vigorously and frequently between the fingers. The conversation is also punctuated with tongue clicks and smacking of the lips. This continued until evening, various other pairs now teaming off in the same manner so that the noise of talking was much greater than on the previous day."

".... Out of the thicket appeared the figure of a strange Indian.....

The stranger halted, eyed us thoughtfully, and then shouted out 'Ol-a.' Kuashu replied, 'Ah,' receiving an equally intelligent grunt of 'Um,' in reply.

If you should suddenly come face to face with a stranger, your natural impulse would be to call out to him and then walk over to where he stood, but these are not the tactics [165] of the Indian. 'Is this man friend or foe?' he asks himself, and if the unknown suddenly veers round and hurries towards him, the obvious answer is: 'He is an enemy, coming to attack.' If, on the other hand, he turns away, he is an enemy trying to escape; but suppose he goes on about his business, or else you both stop and talk, you have time to show your colours and announce your friendly intentions.

Normal Indian conversation is slow and halting, but it can go off like machine-gun fire at times. Should a phrase not come readily, there is no pause. Both parties continue to grunt at each other, holding one hand in front of the mouth all the time and probably expectorating between the fingers with a precision that denotes much practice.

When Kuashu hailed this stranger, we all stood stock still, the boys with the deer slung on a pole, the ends of which rested on their shoulders, Johnston and myself behind them. The conversation which followed, if translated freely into English, would run somewhat as follows. Kuashu began.

'So you are here?'--'Yes, I am here.'--'What are you here for?'--'What am I here

for? '--'Yes, what are you here for? '--'I am wandering about. '--'You are, are you? '
--'Yes, I am. '--'Why do you wander about? '--'I am wandering about for a little time. '
--'For a little time you are wandering? '--'Yes, for a little I wander about visiting
friends. '--'Then you are visiting friends? '--'Yes, for a few days I visit. '--'Only for
a few days, you say? '--'Um, only a few days. '--'I am surprised. '--'You are, are you? '
--'I am surprised that you wander about for a little visiting friends. '--'Um. '--'When
did you come? '--'Only yesterday I came. '--'Yesterday? '--'Um. '--'For a few days
only? '--'That is what I said. '--'You came yesterday to wander about for a little to visit
some friends?' [166] --'Um. '--'Ah--So you understand, do you? '--'Um'--'Ah'--'Um. '

After this fragment of news had been thoroughly pulled to pieces and passed back and forth between the two until its significance had been fully grasped, another piece of intelligence was torn to shreds in the similar manner. The grunts, representing assent or approbation and other guttural noises, that were indulged in, especially when the conversation flagged, were decidedly curious. "

20: Dyott--166
116, 195, 521, 828

(no date) 1926

Jivaro

"Direct questions and answers are not understood by the Jivaros. To ask a deliberate question does not seem to conform to his idea of propriety. Every subject has to be approached by a round-about route and with infinite repetition. This is probably due to the inherent difficulty primitive man has in expressing shades of thought and his round-about course is equivalent to our guarded phraseology noticeable amongst politicians when delicate matters are being discussed. To an Indian, the most trivial incident is of as much importance as it would be to a child, so everything has to be taken seriously. It is also well not to look too intently at the person you are talking to. You may be accused of casting a spell on him if you do. A man looking in can see the world; hence the world looking in can see the man. Such is their line of reasoning, and consequent aversion from the vulgar stare of some white men."

26: Brüning--49 [5]
116, 522, 195

(1902) 1928

Jívaro

The natives, when among themselves, like to joke, and a good joke is greeted with hearty laughter. They show their astonishment by emitting a drawling, softly pronounced gua.

When talking and laughing the Indians frequently keep the hollow of their hand in front of the mouth, as may be seen in Illustration number seven (two Indians in the group to the right). If the conversation becomes animated, then they spit frequently in between.

Very strange are the long monologues or prayers (whatever you may call them) which the Indians say in the morning. These are recited very quickly and in a tone which marks a departure from the ordinary tone of conversation. On these morning occasions, too, they spit frequently and stamp their feet on the ground from time to time (see Nankijukima 75).

They emit a softly pronounced drawling gwa when they are amazed at something.